This is a record book of the Knights of Pythias lodge at Bear Creek in Cedar County, Missouri. The records concern the induction of members and election of officers, purchase of a meeting hall, and distribution of medical benefits.

Justus H. Rathbone founded the Knights of Pythias at Washington, D.C., in 1864. The fraternal organization was dedicated to friendship, charity, and benevolence, principles thought to have been extinguished during the Civil War. Membership was limited to white males. The organization implemented insurance and medical benefit plans in the 1870s. The order was quite successful through the 1920s, when national membership reached its peak of nearly 1,000,000. Its decline in recent years is a classic example of the experience of many American fraternal organizations.

The minutes of the lodge in Bear Creek, Missouri, begin with the organizational meeting on 26 September 1894. Thirty-six members were accepted into ritual orders. John L. Fox was elected chancellor. The records concern routine elections of members and officers, the administration of the Widows and Orphans Fund and “sick benefits” of $2.50 per week, and the rental and acquisition of the meeting hall. The Bear Creek Lodge rented “Castle Hall” until its purchase in 1898. The local chapter of the International Order of the Odd Fellows rented the hall for its meetings in 1899. The records include plans for a wild game hunt and supper by members in December 1901. Guests were invited in what was probably a membership drive. The minutes end on 10 January 1902. The membership application of L. O. Fox, dated 1912, is enclosed at the end of the volume.

This collection is available at The State Historical Society of Missouri. If you would like more information, please contact us at shsresearch@umsystem.edu.

Selected Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>26 September 1894</td>
<td>Organizational meeting of Bear Creek Lodge at “Castle Hall.” Thirty-six members inducted and John L. Fox elected chancellor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 October 1894</td>
<td>Meeting hall rented; Widow &amp; Orphans Fund established.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 October 1897</td>
<td>Committee appointed to negotiate buying meeting hall. The lodge purchased the building from shareholders, January-March 1898.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 January 1899</td>
<td>Meeting hall subleased to Independent Order of Odd Fellows, meetings not to conflict with use by Knights of Pythias. Odd Fellows to carpet hall at their expense if desired.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2 December 1899 Spittoons ordered removed from hall.

5 May 1900 Proposed amendments to medical benefits.

7 December 1901 Plans for wild game hunt and supper by lodge members.

18 January 1902 Final entries in volume.

29 November 1988 Cedar County Historical Society Loaned for microfilming

Index Cards

Bear Creek (Mo.).
Cedar County (Mo.).
Friendly societies—Missouri—Cedar County.
Knights of Pythias. Bear Creek Lodge No. 310 (Cedar County, Mo.).